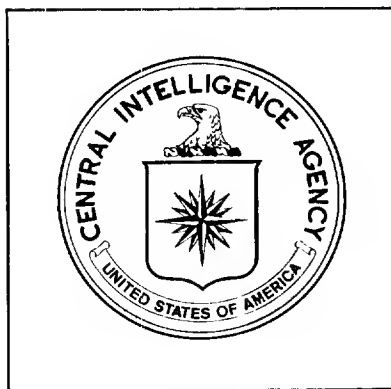


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STAFF NOTES:

Soviet Union Eastern Europe

State Department review completed

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No. 0082/75

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Approved For Release 2002/06/05 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000600280001-6

Approved For Release 2002/06/05 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000600280001-6

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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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US-USSR Joint Commercial
Commission To Meet

The US-USSR Joint Commercial Commission will meet in Moscow on April 10 for the first time since the demise of the 1972 trade agreement at the turn of the year. The embassy suggests--and we agree--that the Soviets will probably be more confident negotiators on this occasion than previously, acting on the conviction that their bargaining position vis-a-vis the US has improved considerably in recent months.

Moscow will argue that the US is now the chief beneficiary of bilateral trade, reversing the roles of earlier sessions in which the Soviets tacitly recognized that they had more to gain. The embassy points out that the Soviets see the US as on the defensive because it failed to deliver on the terms of the trade agreement. They expect economic recession in the West to spur the US to seek Soviet orders and anticipate that competition for the Soviet market from other Western countries will also stimulate American trade concessions.

Despite what the Soviets may regard as a stronger bargaining position, they remain keenly interested in expanded trade with the US. Politically, Moscow values bilateral commercial ties for their contribution to detente with the US; economically, the Soviets continue to regard the US as the preferred source of most capital goods and technology.

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Czechoslovak Suggests Mixed Package
of Reductions at MBFR Talks

A Czechoslovak representative at the MBFR talks made a strong pitch last week for a mixed package of reductions that would include NATO tactical nuclear weapons and "genuinely asymmetrical" cuts in Warsaw Pact ground forces.

The Czechoslovak statement, made [] to a US delegate, is at odds with the Warsaw Pact's recent tendency to play down the air and nuclear aspects of MBFR. It was too well-rehearsed and detailed, however, to have been accidental, and it is highly improbable that the Czechoslovak official was acting on his own initiative. Most likely, Moscow wanted to float a trial balloon prior to the recess that began on March 25. In so doing, the Soviets may hope to smoke out Western intentions concerning the inclusion of tactical nuclear weapons in subsequent stages of negotiation.

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According to the Czechoslovak official, air manpower and aircraft would have to be included in a package with tactical nuclear weapons. He implied that NATO might have to take deeper cuts in its aircraft inventory than the East because of the alleged superior quality of NATO's planes. On the other hand, he specified that there could be genuinely asymmetrical cuts in general forces that would require greater reductions for the Warsaw Pact than would be the case if both sides reduced by equal percentages. He also hinted that the Pact would agree to disproportionately larger cuts in its tank force, provided again that they were part of a suitable package.

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The Czechoslovak said that the Warsaw Pact would find some "indirect way" to handle the sensitive problem of national subceilings, in return for the West accepting the principle that air and nuclear forces be included in the reductions. Data on forces, he said, could be exchanged once the West had agreed in principle to reduce air and nuclear elements. The Western position is that data exchange should be conducted parallel with a discussion of principles.

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Soviet Artist Comments on the Cultural Scene

Renowned sculptor Ernst Neizvestny a maverick but officially accepted artist whose monument for Khrushchev's grave was unveiled last September, recently spoke to a US embassy officer about the current status of Soviet cultural policy. Neizvestny's remarks revealed that he was aware of the regime's concern about its image abroad during a time of detente, and the effect of this concern on the domestic cultural scene. His views, which may be shared by other official artists and many dissidents, are in line with, and add new perspective to, current speculation about a "gradual liberalization" of cultural policy (*Staff Notes*, March 24).

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Neizvestny said that the Western press had "misinterpreted" his plans to leave the country. For some time, he explained, he has wanted to leave Moscow for a prolonged but not necessarily permanent stay in the West, preferably in the US. He threatened to emigrate if he did not receive a favorable decision from the authorities, and then was tentatively offered travel "with a Soviet passport," providing he signs a pledge not to make "anti-Soviet" political statements while abroad. So far, he has refused to sign the pledge, hoping that he can leave with no strings attached.

Neizvestny said that despite his ouster from the Artists Union and veiled threats following publicity about his efforts to leave the country, he has not been harassed. He ascribes his good fortune to his many "admirers," particularly those in the Central Committee apparatus and even in the leadership. He specifically named his "old friends" V. V. Zagladin, deputy chief of the Central Committee's International Department, and V. S. Semenov, deputy foreign minister. Neizvestny believes that

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candidate Politburo member and culture minister Demichev also is favorably disposed to his travel plans, but that Demichev faces opposition from some in the cultural apparatus who fear problems with other official artists if Neizvestny is allowed to leave on his own terms.

Expanding on the theme of the interplay of domestic and foreign policy during detente, Neizvestny said that the Central Committee's International Department and some parts of its Cultural Department--which share responsibility for foreign cultural relations--tend to be "reasonable" in cultural affairs, since one of their tasks is to avoid tarring the Soviet image abroad. On the other hand, those in the cultural bureaucracy and elsewhere in the party apparatus who are responsible for internal controls tend to ignore foreign policy considerations. Neizvestny felt that at present the "reasonable" elements with international responsibilities and insight had a slight advantage because of Soviet detente policy.

Neizvestny believes that this functional relationship between the outward- and inward-oriented elements within the apparatus sheds more light on the persistent ambivalence in cultural policy--and on the current talk of "gradual liberalization"--than does any attempt to assess the relative weight of "liberals" and "conservatives" within the leadership. For example, Neizvestny said that Demichev, who is "no liberal," has responsibilities relating to foreign cultural contacts that make him sensitive to foreign policy considerations. This, in turn, may be influencing Demichev to steer a more flexible course even on strictly internal cultural matters.

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Albania Warns of Soviet Meddling

Tirana has published an article strongly hinting that Moscow has recently tried to suborn unspecified individuals in the Albanian party's leadership, possibly including ousted defense minister Balluku.

The article, which appears in the current issue of the Albanian party journal, was written by Fiqet Shehu, a member of the Central Committee and the wife of Premier and Defense Minister Mehmet Shehu. Mrs. Shehu lashes out against foreign enemies (read, Moscow) that attempt to undermine Albania from within. Now that it is no longer easy for them to operate openly, she writes, these enemies are using "our own people, people who hold a party card and who oppose us by waving the party flag but who, in fact, intentionally distort its teachings. As shown by experience, they would like to recruit for their service...cadre with authority in high positions in the party and state." The article cites as examples such arch enemies as Liri Belishova, who was purged for her pro-Soviet sympathies following Tirana's break with Moscow in 1961.

Anti-Soviet diatribes are standard fare for Albanian propaganda, but this latest article is probably intended to heighten the vigilance campaign that began last summer with the ouster of defense minister Balluku. The reasons for Balluku's fall have never been spelled out, but there is evidence that he criticized the Chinese and perhaps even advocated rapprochement with the Soviets.

Few developments alarm Tirana as much as reports of Soviet machinations in the Balkans, and the article may be a reaction to revelations of

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Soviet meddling in Yugoslav internal affairs. Now that the second cominformist case in six months has come to light in Yugoslavia, the Shehu article may presage more purges in all segments of Albanian society as the xenophobic Hoxha regime attempts to stamp out real or imaginary internal enemies.



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East German Politburo Member Dies

The death on Wednesday of Herbert Warnke, a Politburo member and chief of the East German trade unions, clears the way for party leader Honecker to bring another loyal supporter into the top leadership.

Although the search for a successor could lead outside the trade union organization, Wolfgang Beyreuther, Warnke's deputy, probably has the inside track. In addition to extensive trade union experience, the 47-year-old Beyreuther has served in the Free German Youth (FDJ) organization. Honecker played a leading role in building the FDJ and, since becoming party chief in 1971, he has promoted a number of individuals who got their basic party training in the youth organization.

Beyreuther has risen rapidly under Honecker. He became a candidate member of the Central Committee and Warnke's deputy shortly after Honecker came to power, and in 1973 was promoted to full Central Committee membership.



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